



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Akron Changes Policy Regarding Vicious Dog Attacks

September 28, 2012 (Akron, Ohio) – Today, City officials, which included managers, department directors, police captains, and an animal control officer, met to discuss and revamp its policies regarding City police and animal control officer responses to vicious dog attacks. Two specific changes were discussed and are effective immediately.

First, when there is a vicious dog attack in Akron, the highest ranking Akron Police supervisor on the scene will call the animal control officer directly to discuss the case and to decide whether the animal control officers' services are needed. Prior to today's meeting, the police on the scene would call Safety

Services, who would then call the animal control officer and relay the information about the vicious dog and the attack.

“A direct conversation between the animal control officer and a police supervisor who is at the scene of the attack is the best method to communicate the seriousness of the incident,” said John Valle, Akron’s Director of Neighborhood Assistance. “It seems that the gravity of the attack, or the immediacy of action, may get lost in translation when the message is delivered to a call taker, and then relayed to the animal control officer. Nothing beats hearing firsthand the inflection in the officer’s voice when he is standing at the scene of the attack.”

Second, Akron’s animal control officers will respond to any vicious dog attack as soon as they are notified, even if the dog is under control and in the owner’s house when the animal control officer receives the call. Previously, an animal control officer only responded if there was still a threat to the public, meaning the dog is still roaming the streets, the dog is not under control, or the dog is not contained.

“Our animal control officers have no authority to go into someone’s house and take their dog, even if the dog bit or attacked another person. That is the state of the law whether we like it or not,” said Valle. “Only if the police and/or the animal control officer are able to secure a search warrant from a Judge can the dog be removed from the house once it is contained. Because search warrants are only issued if the dog is an immediate threat to the public, once the dog is under control and secured, the immediate threat to the public has been

eliminated. However, I still believe there is value to our citizens if our animal control officers respond to the scene to gather information about the animal and to attempt to talk with the owner, so that is what we are going to do.”

These new changes are the result of the pit bull attack that occurred 9 days ago where there were two child victims and one adult victim. In that case, the animal control officer followed proper City protocol by not going to the scene of the incident because by the time the animal control officer was called, the dog had already been secured by its owner and in the owner’s residence. The next morning the animal control officer went to the owner’s residence and issued citations.

“Upon review of the incident, I really feel we needed a change of policy so our residents do not feel like the City didn’t respond because it occurred at night and was inconvenient,” said Valle. “Nothing is further from the truth. We do care and we are changing our policy immediately to address this concern.”

End.